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Kemp, James Furman

John Duer Irving

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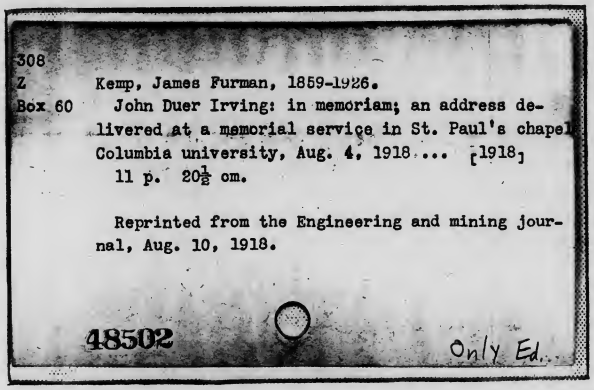
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John Duer Irving

In Memoriam

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By JAMES FURMAN KEMP

An address delivered at a memorial service in St Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Aug. 4, 1918

Reprinted from The Engineering and Mining Journal, Aug. 10, 1918

Jan. 24, 1919 AET

John Duer Irving*

In Memoriam

WE MEET this afternoon to pay our tribute of affectionate remembrance to one who was dear to us all. While more than three thousand miles of blue ocean lie between us and the spot of ground in Flanders made sacred to us by his grave, we cherish none the less the old-time kinship and friendship which have brightened the years that are past and which will give courage and strength to the years which are to come. Here in the chapel of the old Colonial College, which was not only his alma mater, but his father's, and his father's father's, and of his kinsfolk for yet another generation back, we must fittingly recall his life, his works and his friendship. But not alone is his own alma mater paying her tribute of remembrance. Another and still older Colonial college, Yale, now, like Columbia, grown to be a great university, claims our friend for her own. As his teachers here recall the bright and earnest face which looked up to the desk from the student's seat, so there the students who came under his instruction remember the devoted work of one who made their advancement and growth his highest aim.

Even as Yale gave to the new-born Kings College, now Columbia, its first president, in the day of small beginnings, now we of Columbia in this later day of larger growth are glad that our alma mater could place in Yale one who embodied the best traditions and spirit of his college, and one whose character and work will be a treasured possession held in common.

But there is more to be said. The greater part of the last two years of our dear friend's life was passed as an officer of the 11th Regiment of Engineers in the Army of our country. Surviving officers and men are in France, but organized kinsmen of the rank and file of the regiment are in America. They join with Cap-

*An address delivered at a memorial service in St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Aug. 4, 1918, by Professor James F. Kemp.

tain Irving's family and old friends in his two universities to do honor to his memory. Theirs is a tie no less deep and sacred, based as it is in love of our country, for whose service he has given all that man could give; and for which, inspired by his example, we, too, each in his or her sphere, would gladly do no less.

The life of Captain Irving divides itself into several successive and closely interwoven periods. There is the formative time of his boyhood, around which influences were cast, shaping in plain and obvious way his later career. There follow the years in college and university, of distinct and definite preparation. Then came the years of experience in the field in the service of the U. S. Geological Survey, likewise and no less of preparation. Next comes the call to teach, the irresistible impulse to be of more direct and personal service to his fellows; and as time passed the opportunity to address, at the same time, a wider audience as editor. Suddenly into these useful, inspiring and congenial pursuits broke the growing conviction that the world in which we lived was not what we had thought it; that our ideals of government, our rules of openness, loyalty and truth in the relations of life, the very conditions of our existence, were in danger and would need the supreme effort to defend them. We slowly realized that the Robber Barons had not passed away centuries ago. The call to preparation for military service came in the summer of 1916. Plattsburg welcomed Professor Irving, and made him first Private Irving, and then for good service Sergeant Irving. The following spring anticipations proved realities, and Sergeant Irving became Captain Irving of the 11th Engineers, and one of the first to sail for "somewhere in France."

John Duer Irving was born in Madison, Wis., on Aug. 18, 1874. His father, Roland Duer Irving, was at the time professor of geology, mineralogy and metallurgy in the State University of Wisconsin. Roland Irving, the father, had entered Columbia College, in 1863, but trouble with his eyes compelled him to suspend his studies in the classical course in his sophomore year, and to replace study with some months of

life and travel in England. Ultimately his eyes became stronger, and he entered the School of Mines, completing the course for the degree of Engineer of Mines, in the third class graduated, that of 1869. The class of eleven engineers of mines contained other future geologists. It numbered on its roll Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney, of the early survey of the Black Hills, where John, future son of Roland, was in the course of years to make his doctor's dissertation, and, with its publication, his really serious entrance into the profession.

Roland Irving was a favorite student of Professor J. S. Newberry, affectionately known to all his students as "Uncle John," and after some experience in mining and smelting joined the Ohio Survey under Dr. Newberry. The work in Ohio was largely performed during the vacations of the University of Wisconsin, to whose chair Roland Irving was called in 1870. Later his residence in Wisconsin led to two events of prime importance in the history of American geology. He began the study of the Gogebic iron range and caught the clue to the origin and stratigraphy of the iron ores in all the Lake Superior ranges; and he later undertook the mapping and description of the copper-bearing rocks of the Lake Superior region. The formative years of the son John were passed in a home where the father, Roland, was preparing the famous monographs on these two subjects. Not alone did John's father work upon their preparation, but the skillful hand and fine sense of color of his mother were placing on paper the beautiful illustrations of the microscopic minerology of the copper-bearing rocks, and all in the very early days of microscopic rock study in America. Year after year I have shown these beautiful plates to my classes with a word of appreciation of Mrs. Irving, who so skillfully aided her husband with his monographs.

In John's fourteenth year, illness, preying on a constitution never over-strong, deprived him of his father, and left with him the almost sacred duty of following in the footsteps and continuing the work of one interrupted at thirty-nine in mid-career. Mrs. Irving with her three children moved to the East among her kins-

folk, and John was prepared for Columbia College, to represent the fourth generation of his name upon the alumni rolls. His boyhood period closed and his college and university life began.

He entered in 1892 and took the prescribed courses of the time. The vacation of 1895 following his junior year was passed with one of Professor Osborne's parties, in searching for Tertiary vertebrates in the Brown's Park beds of northeastern Utah. On the observations there obtained was based the first contribution of John Irving to geological literature. Following his senior year, he went with me to the Adirondacks and had a month or two of experience with the old-time crystalline rocks in the mountains around Elizabethtown. The vacation after his first year of graduate study we found a place for him in the field party of Dr. Whitman Cross in the steep and rugged mountains of the San Juan region of southwestern Colorado. About this time I made a visit to the northern Black Hills of South Dakota and became impressed with the extremely interesting problems presented by the local geology, which, as I have stated, had been covered by the pioneer work of Roland Irving's old classmates in the School of Mines, Henry Newton and Walter P. Jenney. A large-scale map had been prepared by Professor Frank C. Smith and Dr. Macgillicuddy, of the Dakota School of Mines, at Rapid City, and by the generous coöperation of these two friends we were enabled to start our John on the field work for his doctor's dissertation. With its completion and the taking of his doctor's degree in 1899, the second period of his life merged into the third period—that of active work in the outside world. The change is always a trying one to a young man and brings an experience in meeting which the steadying hands and advice of his old professors perhaps do their best service.

Combined with a most creditable passing of the civil service examinations, his dissertation on the Black Hills brought to its author an appointment in the ranks of the U. S. Geological Survey, and assignment to the party then undertaking the investigation of the mineral resources of this area. The study of the mines placed

our young Dr. Irving in close association with the most respected of American mining geologists, that fine, true, Nature's nobleman, Samuel Franklin Emmons, and in the end made of our John Dr. Emmons' closest helper. Years afterward when Dr. Emmons passed away, leaving in fragmentary and uncompleted state the great new monograph on Leadville, it was John Irving who finished the manuscript and forwarded it to the Survey ready for the printer.

Following the field experience in the Black Hills, John Irving was busied in association with F. L. Ransome in the Globe district of Arizona; with J. M. Boutwell in the Park City district of Utah; with W. H. Emmons in the Needle Mountains quadrangle of Colorado, and with Howland Bancroft at Lake City in the same state. He also did mapping of coal-bearing quadrangles in Indiana, under M. L. Fuller, and in Pennsylvania, under M. R. Campbell. While on the Survey and spending the winters in Washington, John Irving entered heartily into the life of the younger men and was active in the so-called Association of Aspiring Assistants of the Survey, whose initials were a sort of caricature of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

But the desire to teach, partly inherited, partly acquired, was very strong, too strong to be longer suppressed, and with its gratification in 1903 John Duer Irving took up after ripe preparation the teacher's part of his career. The opportunity came to me to suggest to my old friend Professor Wilbur L. Knight, of the University of Wyoming, one who might substitute for him during a year's leave of absence. The offer proved agreeable to Dr. Irving, and he undertook the work, retaining, however, his connection with the Survey for the free time of the vacations. The following year he was called to be assistant professor of geology at Lehigh University, and was promoted to the full chair in 1906. In 1907 he was called to be professor of economic geology at the Sheffield Scientific School of Yale, where he shared in developing the mining course made possible by the gift of the Hammond Laboratory. This profes-

sorship Dr. Irving held up to the sad event which has brought us together.

In 1905, while John Irving was at work at Lehigh University, the plan was developed of establishing a magazine which might be the special means of expression and record for the vigorous young school of American students of ore deposits and applied geology, which had then become a marked feature of our scientific life. We gathered a little band willing to risk a part of their worldly possessions in the venture, with no thought of return. John Irving was our choice for managing editor. To his untiring efforts, ably aided by the unselfish work of W. S. Bayley as business manager, we chiefly owe the thirteen volumes of this most valuable and interesting journal. As we turn its pages we see from time to time the subjects which specially appealed to its editor. His work in the mining districts emphasized the importance of oreshoots and local places of value in veins, and he seeks to classify and systematize their causes. He is again impressed with the importance of a comprehensive study of special problems wherever one particular case of them may be illustrated, as contrasted with the generally localized investigations carried on by one individual. The committee which has been for several years studying secondary enrichment with L. C. Graton in charge carries out exactly this idea. John Irving's extended Leadville experience, in the mines where S. F. Emmons first formulated the ideas of replacement of rock with ore, leads him to seek to establish criteria whereby replacement bodies may be identified. Thus as we turn the pages of the magazine we see how year by year an active and thoughtful mind was philosophically pondering now this, now that important phase of his special branch of science.

And then, while in the full exercise of his many useful activities, rose above the horizon the dark cloud of the Robber Barons' war. In the spring and early summer of 1916, I know from intimate talks that John Irving felt the danger menacing his country, and others like it, from the growing threat of the worst features of mediævalism. Being unmarried, he believed that,

even though he was past forty years of age, it was his duty to go to Plattsburg and enter the officers' training camp. He took up its routine earnestly and seriously, and he wrote with great pride of the satisfaction which his promotion to be a non-commissioned officer gave him. When the camp closed he entered his name as one available for service if conditions called for him. In the spring of 1917 those conditions materialized. He took his officer's examination, was appointed captain and was granted leave of absence by the authorities of Yale. At first he expected to serve as topographic engineer or as an interpreter of the air-plane photographs. He jestingly referred to himself as "skyographer." Actually he became a recruiting officer for the 11th Regiment of Engineers, in whose ranks are so many of our friends and colleagues. With them, he sailed for France in July, 1917. Of his special field of work we are not fully informed, because of the censorship, but my own letters from him inform us that he was early engaged in railway construction, and worked just as long hours as one possibly could in building the arteries of supply and nourishment of the Army. His duties last fall we know brought him under shell-fire, and he learned to keep his nerve amid these trying conditions. Like so many of our boys, he writes jestingly of them, taking the dangers in the light-hearted way of our countrymen as being all in the day's work.

Later, when tunneling and the exploding of mines beneath the enemy's works achieved such importance, he was transferred to the engineers' school at headquarters, and was busy with a seemingly endless procession of classes to be instructed in the rudiments of mining engineering. His letters show that the calls were hard, exacting and exhausting. He speaks of never having worked so hard in all his life. Probably his vitality ran low, and his powers of resistance and recuperation were exhausted. We only know that on the 20th of July, despite every effort, pneumonia following the grippe epidemic, could not be resisted, and that one more name was added to the honor roll.

As we all look back over this brief sketch of the many activities of a busy and useful life, we see that it was

filled to the very limit. Those of us who knew John Irving well, know that the duties and calls were met faithfully and with a high sense of responsibility. Many of them were essentially unselfish. The magazine *Economic Geology* was a labor of love. The time of Professor Irving was never so valuable but that a student could command advice and guidance. The full strength and more of Captain Irving were given to his country. And yet we know that the calls often bore heavily on a physique none too robust. Although tall and broad-shouldered of stature, our friend had some delicacy of constitution which asserted itself at times of special stress and which gave warning that certain limits must not be passed.

Though I have spoken of his scientific work, I have not mentioned that many talks while we have been off together on the trips which meant much to us both revealed to me ambitions in literary expression and composition which were in keeping with the high traditions of his family, bound up, as they are, with one of the very first of our really great men of letters. Insistent calls prevented John Irving from realizing all that was in his mind; but the ambition certainly gave lucidity and clearness to his scientific writings.

It is, however, as friend that we like best to recall him, and in these respects we know well that while his work lives after him, the fine sweet inspiration of his life will endure still longer. We live in the most trying times with which we have all been confronted for nearly three generations. Faith is called for as seldom before in our experience. We must have the grim and unshaken holding on to calm belief in the triumph of right and in the subordination of cruelty and unbridled selfishness to the control of law and justice. A decent consideration for the rights of others and observance of them must not perish from the earth, nor must the rule of abominable materialism be permitted to exercise its sway over victims unable to protect themselves. For these high causes John Duer Irving gave his all. Useful and inspiring as he was in life, he rises to yet greater heights in his supreme sacrifice, and to us who

yet remain he is a sermon whose moving appeal causes to sound aloud the deepest chords of our nature.

We men of engineering training are almost if not quite military in our general attitude toward life. We are repressive of emotion; not that we do not feel, but that we are anxious that our feelings should be real and genuine, and not the light thing that comes and goes like a fickle breeze. Tonight we can give full and deep expression to the very profound emotions which these services evoke. At such times prose fails us. My old classmate in the School of Mines and dear friend, Frank Dempster Sherman, whose verse has an appeal seldom equaled, has left these lines with us as if they had been written of John Duer Irving:

Lord, in whose hand I am but dust,
 Make Thou of me a vessel whole,
 Worthy to guard the precious soul
Thou gavest me in trust.

Keep me unmarred by strife and sin
 Throughout the brief span of my years.
 Let joy's bright sun and sorrow's tears
Keep pure the flower within.

Grant, if Thou wilt, mine eye to see
 It grow to beauty at thy feet;
 To find at last the blossom sweet
Of immortality.

And when this body that is mine,
 This earthly frame, which Thou hast made,
 Is dust and with the earth dust laid,
Lord, take the flower for thine.

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